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"LINCOLN AS I KNEW HIM"

REMARKS

of

GENERAL J. WARREN KEIFER

at Wittenberg College Radio Broadcasting Station (WCSO)
Springfield, Ohio, February 11th, 1927
at 8:00 P. M., on

"LINCOLN AS I KNEW HIM"

I am thankful for the privilege, for the first time in my life, of addressing a radio audience. I cannot know how many are my hearers nor can I realize the wonders of such inventions.

We are all delighted to honor the memory of the great American whose birthday is celebrated tomorrow. Although he died almost 62 years ago he belongs to the present era of American history. His career was perhaps the most notable one in America and his life ended at the age of 56.

Lincoln for a number of years before the Civil War had been a distinguished lawyer and prominent public man in Illinois, although probably not nationally known until his famous debates with Douglas in the campaign

of 1858, in which he was defeated for the Senatorship.

I was admitted to the bar January 12, 1858, by the Supreme Court of Ohio. Shortly thereafter I made a journey to a number of places before finally locating for the practice of the law. Chicago was one place I visited, but it was apparently without promise. In February, 1858, I was in Springfield, Illinois, attending a session of the Supreme Court of Illinois. There I saw and heard an ungainly appearing man who was reported to me to be "Abe Lincoln." He was arguing the application of a statute of limitations to a defective tax title to land. He talked very much in a conversational way to the judges, and they gave attention, and in a Socratic way the discussion went on. I did not see anything to specially attract attention to Mr. Lincoln, save that he was awkward, ungainly in build, more than plain in features, roughly clad, his clothes not fitting him, his trousers being several inches too short, exposing a long, large, unshapely foot. But he was even then, by those who knew him best, regarded as intellectually and professionally a great man.

Shortly thereafter I came to hear and know a great

deal about this crude looking lawyer, and in 1860, although but 24 years of age, I took an active part in that exciting campaign, making many speeches in support of Lincoln for the presidency. War then came and I served under this great Commander-in-Chief from the beginning of the War until his death.

When the final attack of the Army of the Potomac upon the Confederate works defending Petersburg and Richmond was about to begin, President Lincoln visited the Army at the front. There I saw him on March 25, 1865, twenty days before his assassination. He was at the time on horseback with General Wright, my Corps Commander. I was engaged in directing an attack upon a Confederate position under orders from superior officers, and in making the attack in accordance with the orders our forces were being driven back. I rode up to see General Wright to protest against the orders and to get authority to make the attack in an effective way. In my eagerness to take up the matter in hand with General Wright I probably addressed him rather abruptly. He motioned to me somewhat to repress my eagerness and then introduced me to President

Lincoln, who was on horseback watching the result of the assault on the enemy's outer line of works. On this occasion he looked much the same as on my first seeing him, except better dressed. On both occasions he appeared to be a sad man, thoughtful and serious. I did not tarry long at the interview, for General Wright ordered me to proceed as I suggested, and I was in haste to join the forces then engaged. I am proud to say that our movement then under the eye of the President of the United States was successful. The surrender of Lee occurred 15 days later.

Lincoln lived to see slavery actually destroyed, not only by his Emancipation Proclamation of 1863, but by the effectual destruction of the Confederate forces, and the Union of the States was preserved.

Less than ten years before his death Lincoln had written "Our political problem now is, 'Can we as a nation continue together permanently — forever — half slave, and half free'? The problem is too mighty for me. May God in His mercy superintend the solution."

Under God, within ten years after this was written, Lincoln was the instrument for the solution of the mighty problem.

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